

**NKS International Parents Forum** had a third meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2012. The meeting was attended by over 50 people. There was a representative from the Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian, and the Scouts. The two schools had accepted the invitation to attend, but could not make for the meeting for various reasons. Sarah Boyack, MSP attended the meeting and also gave her views on issues for young people.

There was a lively discussion around various themes, which are as follows:

### **Theme 1 – would you like to share your experiences of issues around children at home?**

The participants generally felt that everyone has issues with young people at home – some face more issues and others face less. Sharing experiences around issues will go a long way in sharing strategies to deal with such issues as a family unit. Some of the issues that participants felt were:

- Expectations of children are very high, but sometimes as parents we are too busy to help them meet these. When parents have difficulties themselves, they don't hear and understand what children are saying.
- There should be trust between a parent and a child. It's important to come down to the children's level and understand them as there is a generation gap. The education begins at home. Living in this country, we should bring up children to integrate into mainstream society.
- It's really important to be children's friends and parents. If we are always in our role as a parent, children will not communicate and approach us. Asking too many questions may not get a positive response. Respect is important. In case of Asian children; when they get bullied at school they don't tell parents as there is not much trust with parents. Children do not complain at school either for similar reasons as trust. The only option left for children is to take the matter in their own hands and attempt to deal with it in disruptive ways which eventually goes against them. The whole process is not helping ethnic minority children in schools.
- The participants felt that it is easier for parents who are brought up in this country as they understand the system, but in case of parents who have not been to school in this country, it can be a daunting experience.

### **Theme 2 – Would you like to be self-reflective of your own behaviour while dealing with children?**

- Teacher is one in a class with a responsibility to manage a class full of pupils. At times a teacher is not able to give one to one attention to each child. Parents have as much responsibility to deal with their children's education and any issues arising.
- It's important for parents to attend parent/teacher meetings.

- Parents have fears that complaining sometimes lead to spoiled relations with schools
- Racism is still an issue in schools, although the Council has a zero tolerance policy.
- The participants wondered why a school could have a bad reputation in some areas. It was felt that history, culture and ethos make a school good or bad.
- In case of any issues arising, the Edinburgh Council has certain procedures in place i.e. a counsellor and the Advisory Conciliation Service, that can act as a mediator.

**Theme 3 – Would you like to get more information about school system, curriculum, and projects in schools?**

- There is a 'growing confidence project in schools.
- There are weight management projects in schools for children.
- The participants also informed that sometimes when their children are very young they are frightened to send them to mainstream Nurseries. So many of the parents have used the NKS Nursery for their children, as they felt children's cultural needs were met.
- Parents need more education and awareness about schools and systems, projects, curriculum in schools.
- Parents should get involved more with their children's schools.
- Scotland has diverse cultures and through this forum there is a scope to take the best from every culture and build on parenting skills living in Scottish society.
- The participants felt that parents should get involved by volunteering in schools.
- NKS could set up a volunteer training programme to train volunteers and carry out disclosures.
- It was suggested that the Council could organize sessions around schooling systems for the participants through the forum.
- It's difficult to catch up with the school system as it changes so fast, even between siblings, when in school, things change.
- The Scouts were another platform where children could get support with their personal development.
- Parents who do not read and write English find it very difficult to understand and support their children with homework. Home work clubs are very important for ethnic minority children.
- Parents have barriers such as low confidence, language barrier etc. to get involved.

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